

[1 March, 2007]

RAJYA SABHA

Weapons in outer space

*53. SHRIJANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have exhorted the world community, particularly its neighbouring countries, to keep the outer space free of weapons;

(b) if so, the details in this regard and the occasion that prompted India to make such an exhortation; and

(c) what are the responses, if any, received in this regard from different countries?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) Government has been participating in all the relevant international forums for promoting peaceful uses of outer space besides being closely engaged with the multilateral effort towards keeping outer free of weapons. India's traditional position on non-weaponisation of outer space has been reiterated in these forums.,

(c) Recent debates in the relevant multilateral forums in Vienna and Geneva have provided the opportunity for many States to reiterate their commitment to the peaceful uses of outer space. Government continues to monitor developments on this subject.

Collection of emigration fund

*54. SHRI K.E. ISMAIL: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that people going abroad, particularly to Gulf countries, for job have to deposit emigration fund;

(b) if so, the details thereof and when this practice was started;

(c) what is the amount so far collected on this account;

(d) whether this fund has been utilised to help migrant Indian labour facing any difficulties abroad and for the rehabilitation of such people who have returned from abroad; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) to (e) As per Rule 17 of the emigration Rules, 1983, an emigrant recruited directly by a foreign employer is required to deposit one way return air fare as security to meet the costs of his repatriation, if required. Such deposit is refundable to the emigrant concerned as and when claimed by the returnee on production of requisite documents. However, with the introduction of the Pravasti Bhartiya Bima Yojana, 2003 (as revised in 2006) such deposit one way air fare has been discontinued with effect from 25.12.2003, since the said Bima Yojana provides for the cost of such repatriation.

All the end of the year 2006, outstanding deposits by the emigrants amounted to Rs. 26.93 crores (approx). Claims by the emigrants on return is an ongoing process..

Indian doctors in Britain

*55. SHRIMATI S.G. INDIRA: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state;

(a) whether it is a fact that over 10,000 doctors from India who are undergoing training in Britain may be forced to return home after they lost a legal challenge;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the doctors' association had said the judgment was very disappointing; and

(d) the steps being taken by Government to sort out this issue?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) to (d) The British Government has implemented new immigration and employment regulations on 7th March, 2006, under which all non-EU doctors will hereafter require a work permit to work in the UK. However, work permit will be given against specific vacancies for which suitable UK/EU doctors are not available. The new regulations abolished the Permit-Free Training (PFT) category through which most Indian Medical Graduates (IMG) worked in the UK. The new regulations were confirmed by an order of the British High Court on 9th